

**A**s all of our loyal members know, the past several years have seen numerous changes in the volunteers who are doing the work of running the Society. We sincerely appreciate the patience of the membership during our transition, and we will continue to strive to produce a quality Newsletter and provide all of the other services to which our membership has become accustomed.

As all of you know, Walter Seton is our new supplies person. All orders should go directly to Walter. In addition, any requests for missed issues or orders for back issues of the Newsletter should go to Walt. He is also now selling the Yasukuni-To translation and will soon have for sale another translation on Hizen. Details on the contents and price of the Hizen translation should be available in the next Newsletter. Walter's address is 10931 E. Pleasant Place, Gold Canyon, Arizona 85219.

All payments of dues should go to the \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The only communications that should go to the Newsletter Editor are articles for submission to the Newsletter and requests to advertise in the Newsletter.

We need to get our elections back on track. We are soliciting nominations of individuals for officers and directors of the Society. Since it has been several years since we held an election, most of the positions are up for election, including President, Vice President, Secretary, and directors. In order to run for office, an individual must have been a member of the Society, in good standing, for the last five years and must be willing to travel to the shows where meetings are held. Currently, meetings are generally held twice per year at the Tampa and San Francisco shows. In addition, the officers and directors perform a variety of tasks during the year and are asked to provide at least one article for publication in the Newsletter or Art & The Sword.

We solicit nominations of individuals who are willing to work for the benefit and improvement of the Society. If you or an individual you know meet the qualifications, please consider running

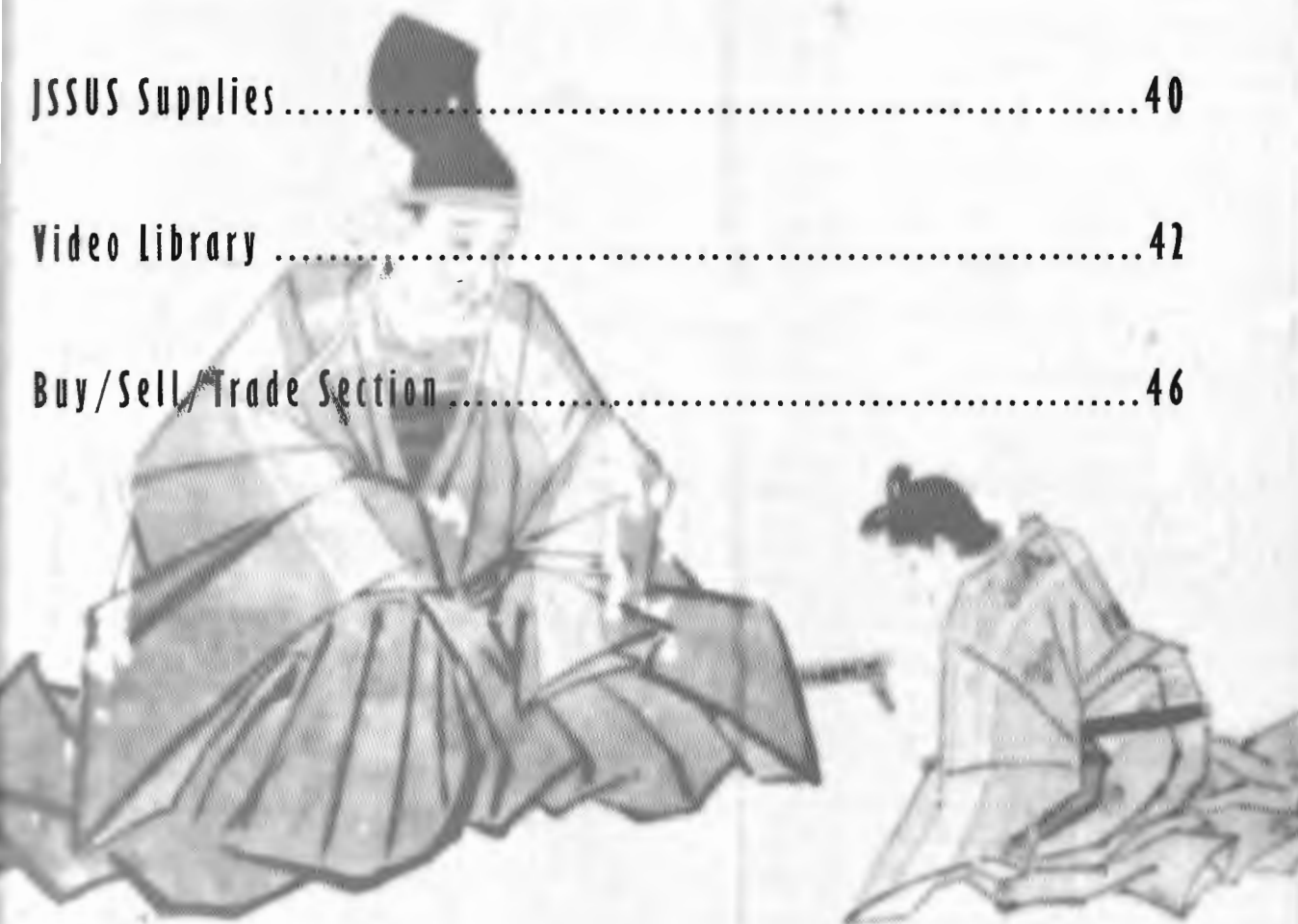
for one of the offices. No one should be nominated without their permission. All nominations should be sent to Jos  Gueco, M.D., 33-B Trolley Square, Wilmington, Delaware 19806. All nominees will be asked to provide very brief biographical information of no more than three or four lines to put on the ballot.

This Society exists for the benefit of its membership. We realize that for most of you the primary benefits you receive are the Newsletter or Art & The Sword. We will continue to work to reach our goal of providing you with a **quality product** on a timely basis. The Society also needs your **membership dues** in order to function and to produce a **quality product**. I ask each of you to remain **loyal to the Society** and to **promptly pay** your dues so that we can continue to provide a **quality product**.

Very truly yours,

Dale B. Garbutt  
 President

About JSSUS .....	4
Ad and Ad Payments .....	5
Editors Corner .....	6
Minatogawa Shrine .....	7
JSSUS Supplies .....	40
Video Library .....	42
Buy/Sell/Trade Section .....	46



# Editors Corner

I hope that you (the membership) have enjoyed the JSSUS Journal this year. It took a lot of work and I really appreciate the help of a lot of friends. Without their help and support, this would not have been possible. I gather that this issue may not make it to you all before the end of the year, so I'll just wish everyone a Happy New Year!!! It is a tradition in Japan among sword collectors to put on display for the New Year, their latest acquisition or their favorite piece for the first week of the New Year. Hopefully you collectors out



there have bought something special for your collections this year, and for those of you that were lucky enough to have a sword achieve Juyo-Token status in the year 2000, congratulations.

**Important note:** Please remember to renew your memberships!!! This new journal is costing quite a bit more to publish, therefore your dues as well as support are needed more than ever. Included in this issue should be an envelope for your dues, please post and return as soon as possible. Any or all ads or ads for the classified should be sent to me before the end of January 2001.

News flash: According to the NBTHK October issue, there has been a rash of "fake" Juyo-Token certified swords coming out of the Osaka surrounding area. Please be careful if you are considering buying a Juyo-Token that might seem a little "too reasonable" in the near future. We

hope to provide in the future a way for these items to be checked after I speak with some of the people at the NBTHK. Information as of now is that these Juyo-Token papers are of



the old style, and as far as they know, none from the new style of paper.

Once again Myself and the editors staff wish everyone a very Happy New Year and I hope that everyone finds that sword or fitting that they have always wanted in this new year 2001!

Please Renew Your Dues!!!

M. Yamasaki

Editor JSSUS/2000



## GENDAITO MADE AT THE MINATOGAWA SHRINE

## GENDAITO MADE AT THE MINATOGAWA SHRINE

Herman A. Wallinga

The modern city of Kobe, on the Inland Sea, was initially bisected by the small Minato River (Minatogawa) <sup>1</sup>, separating it into the eastern port of Kobe and the western city of Hyogo. In or near the bed of this river, which has since been diverted, Kusunoki Masashige (楠正成) <sup>2</sup> commanding the imperial forces of Emperor Go-Daigo, was defeated by the usurper Ashikaga Takauji. (Kusu no Ki = Camphor Tree after a grove of camphor trees found in the gardens of his ancestral mansion). This defeat led to the beginning of the Ashikaga shogunate.

After this unequal and fierce battle the wounded Masashige, also called Nanko (dear lord camphor), in order to die with an unsullied reputation, committed seppuku at the age of 42 with 150 retainers including his brother Masasue on May 25 1336. He thus established himself in Japanese history as a preeminent symbol of patriotism, devotion to duty, and courage. Some of his descendants continued to fight the shogunate.

With the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of Emperor Meiji in 1868, a Shinto shrine (jinja) was established in Masashige's name celebrating his courage and unswerving devotion to the throne. This shrine, the Minatogawa or Nanko shrine <sup>3</sup> (湊川神社), was built in 1872 on the spot where he died in Hyogo near the bridge connecting that city to Kobe.

Attempts to ennoble authentic descendants of Kusunoki Masashige at that time were unsuccessful and the Kusunoki family mon: Kikusui (菊水) (chrysanthemums floating in water; the flower indicating imperial lineage) was removed from the roll of modern Japanese heraldry. This mon was adopted by the shrine and was subsequently also used by the Imperial Japanese Navy. An example of this mon is found in the form of a seal on a Japanese flag signed by forty individuals during a visit to the shrine. <sup>4</sup> Depiction of this mon on subsequently described swords and as used by the Imperial Japanese Navy is more stylized.

Swords have been forged at this shrine. Imura Kasho in his *Shinshinto Taikan*, Vol. 1 page 118 depicts an oshigata of a katana by Gassan Sadakazu made in the Meiji period 13 years after the shrine's founding.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See figure # 1

<sup>2</sup> See figures # 2, 3 and 4

<sup>3</sup> See figures # 5 and # 7

<sup>4</sup> See figure # 6

<sup>5</sup> See oshigata # 1

Omote: <Kikusui> OITE NANKO SHINZEN GASSAN MINAMOTO SADAKAZU SEITAN KORE  
 (Mindfully made this in front of Nan Ko Shinzen Gassan Minamoto Sadakazu)  
Ura: MEIJI JU HACHI NEN ROKU GATSU HI (A day in June 1885)

In 1940 discussions were held between Rear Admiral Teramoto Takeji (寺本 武治) part-time professor at the Naval Staff College, Rear Admiral Morizumi Matsuo (森住 松雄) Chief Superintendent Kobe Naval Area, Chief Priest Goto (後藤) of the Minatogawa Jinja, and others leading to the formation of the Kikusui Tanto Kai (菊水鍛刀会), the Kikusui Sword Forging Association. The objective of this association was to create Nihonto dedicated to the shrine and engraved with the shrine's Kikusui mon. These swords were to be presented to naval officers and others who with their lives were to embody the spirit of Dainanko, the Japanese spirit. Dainanko is enshrined at the Minatogawa Jinja and allegedly all naval personnel honored him at the time.

On December 25 1940, a sword forging dedication ceremony was held on the temporary forging area in front of the Oratory of the shrine. Murakami Michimasa (村上 道政), a smith from Izumo, and Moriwaki Kaname (森脇 要), a smith from Hoki, with spectators in attendance, performed a solemn firing ceremony and sword forging was commenced by these two smiths and 6 disciples. The plan was to forge two to three hundred swords per year.<sup>1</sup> The author hereby assumes both smiths were senior or head smiths and instructors.

Approximately a year later, on December 2 1941, the smithy was moved from the shrine grounds to historic mount Ege (会下 山), an 80 meter nearby hill where Masashige had his headquarters in the past. A religious firing ceremony was performed here on December 8 the day the Emperor declared war, and forging resumed.<sup>2</sup>

The shrine was destroyed by fire during a major air raid on March 17 1945, though its employees were able to move the object of worship (Goshintai), and a temporary main building was constructed. Local parishioners were able to stop a plan by the Occupation Forces for the destruction of most of the historical relics of the shrine in February of 1946. One month later, the shrine's title of Special Government Shrine was cancelled.<sup>3</sup> The main building was rebuilt and dedicated on December 22 1950.

The author does not know if the smithy on mount Ege was damaged or destroyed. There was a brief interruption in the production of tachi and subsequently production was changed to tanto until the end of the war.<sup>4</sup> It is presumed therefore that sword production continued until August 15 1945.

<sup>1</sup> Kikusui Vol. 9, # 2, p. 14

<sup>2</sup> Kikusui Vol. 10, # 1, p. 15

<sup>3</sup> Likely reflecting the change from State Shinto to Shrine Shinto as a result of the Shinto Directive of December 15 1945 issued by the Occupation Forces.

<sup>4</sup> Moriwaki

The following smiths were active at the shrine according to Mr. Moriwaki Kaname (Masataka): <sup>1</sup>

Personal name	Born	Art name
Murakami Michimasa (村上道政) ----- (This smith apparently is Murakami Muramitsu (村上村光))	1900 --- -----	Masatada (正忠)
Moriwaki Kaname (森脇要) -----	1912 -----	Masataka (正孝)

Masuda Tetsuo (益田哲雄) -----	1915 -----	Masaaki (正明)
Okada Yoshiaki (岡田義明) -----	1917 -----	Masanao (正直)
Fujiwara Yoshinori (藤原義憲) -----	1924 -----	Masayoshi (正義)
Ito Kishinaga (伊藤岸永) -----	1912 -----	Masakiyo (正清)

Ohara Akimasa (大原章将)
Yamazaki Taketoshi (山崎武寿)
Ooe Jiro (大江二郎)
Maruyama (丸山)
Tanaka Atsushi (田中敦志)
(All were alive in 1987)

(The individuals in the lower two boxes were among Mr. Moriwaki's students during the period 1937-1945.)

During a solemn swordsmith naming ceremony at the shrine on July 12 1941 the art names Masatada and Masataka were bestowed on swordsmiths Murakami Michimasa and Moriwaki Kaname respectively. During this ceremony these two smiths stepped forward to the altar and swore to dedicate their body and soul to uphold the honor and embodiment of divine virtue. Various related persons and swordsmiths participated in this ceremony. <sup>2 3</sup>

These art names include as the first character the Masa kanji 正 that was likely adopted from the hero Masashige's name.

<sup>1</sup> Moriwaki

<sup>2</sup> Kikusui Vol. 9, # 5, pp. 14, 15

<sup>3</sup> See figure # 8

With regards to the second kanji of these art names the following sword by Gassan Sadakatsu <sup>1</sup>, (which is not believed to have been forged at the shrine) is of interest:

Omote?: BEKKAKU KAMPEISHA MINATOGAWA JINJA GO SHIMPO ON TACHI YOTETSU

(Made with surplus steel of a treasured tachi of the special <belonging to the second highest class of pre-war shrines> Minatogawa shrine)

Ura?: SHOWA HACHI NEN JU GATSU KICHI NICHI (A lucky day in October, 1933)

KAIHOTO GASSAN SADAKATSU KINSAKU <Kakihan>

(? Treasure sword that guards the family? Gassan Sadakatsu respectfully made this <seal>)

Horimono:

Omote?: <Kikusui>

Ura?: CHU KO (loyalty and filial piety) <sup>2</sup>, a slogan appropriate for the shrine; Masashige representing Chu, and his eldest son Masatsura representing Ko. <sup>3 4</sup>

The CHU KO horimono may also be read as Tada 忠 and Taka 孝. <sup>5</sup> It is reasonable to infer that the two smiths used these characters as the second part of their art name respectively.

Four of the other individuals were subsequently also given an art name with the Masa kanji. Those that did not may have been in student status, i.e. were hammermen, and did not yet meet the needed qualifications. Some may have left the Tanto Kai or were drafted. There were others in this category whose names were not remembered by Mr. Moriwaki.

Masatada came from Shimane Prefecture; left the shrine in 1942 and died of illness in 1944 at the age of 44. <sup>6</sup>

Uchiyama Hiroshi's article in Token Bijutsu of June 1969 lists a Murakami Muramitsu (村上村光) who used the mei: Masatada (正忠) and Michimasa (道正). This smith along with Moriwaki Kaname was sent from the Yasuki plant of Hitachi Metals to study at the Nihonto Tanrenkai of the Yasukuni Jinja. They worked there with various smiths but studied mainly under Kotani Yasunori. He returned to the Yasuki plant as Chief of the Nihonto Research Department and forged swords there prior to joining the Kikusui Tanto Kai in 1941. He left that shrine in 1944 to rejoin the Yasuki plant and died in that year. A list of swordsmiths compiled by Kurihara Akihide in 1942 includes a Murakami

<sup>1</sup> See oshigata # 2

<sup>2</sup> Considered obligatory. The Chrysanthemum and the Sword pp. 116-117

<sup>3</sup> According to an essay written by a naval cadet for his English instructor, (the author of Etajima: p. 61) the last instruction of Masashige to his 12-year-old son was: "You must obey your mother and grow to manhood and defeat Takauji. This is my last desire and your duty as a filial son".

<sup>4</sup> Wada Tsuguyasu, letter to the author of May 3, 2000

<sup>5</sup> This slogan is also depicted on the nakago of a gendaito made by Shoda Masafusa (Ohno p. 143)

<sup>6</sup> Moriwaki



The aforementioned article by Uchiyama mentions that Masataka also used the mei Morimitsu (森光) and Masamitsu (正光), probably before 1952. His forging style was similar to Masatada's: aiming to produce swords in Bizen style with choji, medium kissaki and ko-itame.

It also lists Kanetani Katsuhiro Katsumasa (金谷勝宏勝正), Hayashi Ryuui Nagataka (林隆次長孝<sup>1</sup>), Okada Masanao (岡田正直<sup>2</sup>), Hirai Masamitsu (平井正光) and Ishido Kitaji Masamori (石道喜多治正守<sup>3</sup>) as his students. Kobayashi Tatsuji Kiyokane (小林辰二<sup>4</sup>) was a student of Masamori who (according to Ohno) in turn was a teacher to Suruga Shizuo Masamitsu (駿河静男将充<sup>5</sup>). He also lists in a recent article in Token Bijutsu of July 1998 Endo Isao Masakuni (遠藤勲正国) as a student of Masataka.

The Yasukuni tatara ceased operation in 1945. In 1970 Masataka made the initial call of a series of research meetings<sup>6</sup> prior to the establishment of the NBTHK tatara which were attended by swordsmiths such as Sumitani Shohei, Amada Akitsugu and Gassan Sadakazu who were involved in efforts to create tamahagane.<sup>7</sup> He was a Director of the Yonago Branch of the NBTHK, a sword Registration Judge for the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs, and founder and Chairman of the West Japan Branch of the All Japanese Swordsmith Association in 1981. He was awarded many prizes for his swords<sup>8</sup>, which include The Prime Minister's Prize in 1940 for a sword, owned by General Nishio. He was still active as a smith in 1987 at the age of 75 and passed away in 1999.

The author has little information about the remaining four smiths signing with the Masa kanji as part of their art name:

MASAAKI, died in 1980 at the age of 65.

MASANAOK, from Hyoshibu, Tottori Prefecture. Died in 1979 at the age of 62.

MASAYOSHI, was alive in 1987 at the age of 63.

MASAKIYO, from Kochi Prefecture. Died in 1974 at the age of 62.

The author's concept of the teacher-student relationship concerning this small group of smiths is shown in a diagram at the end of the text of this article.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ohno p. 87

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the Minatogawa Jinja smiths. Also listed as a student is Masuda Masaaki (増田正昭) who probably is the same Masaaki as mentioned by Moriwaki

<sup>3</sup> Ohno p.121

<sup>4</sup> Ohno p. 139

<sup>5</sup> Ohno p. 143

<sup>6</sup> Ohno Tadashi. Toko-hen 1978. pp. 217-220

<sup>7</sup> Han Bing Siong. "The Significance of the Yasukuni Shrine for the Contemporary Sword History" Part V, p.7

<sup>8</sup> Han Bing Siong in "The Significance of the Yasukuni Shrine for the Contemporary Sword History" Part I, p. 18, mentions that Masataka received the following NBTHK sword contest awards: the Patronage award in 1970, the Hardwork award from 1974 through 1978 and 1980 through 1984, and the Winner's award in 1956, 1967, 1969, 1971 through 1973, 1979 and 1987.

<sup>9</sup> This is with the understanding that a smith may have had more than one teacher who may not be depicted on this chart.



At the request of the Imperial Japanese Navy, swords were made in Ko-Bizen style with suguha or ko-choji hamon.<sup>1</sup> Blade length specification was between 2 shaku 1 sun 5 bu and 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu (25.7"-26.8"; 65-68 cm) with a sori between 5 and 8 bu (0.6"-1"; 1.5-2.4 cm) with forging in a traditional manner (Masataka does not mention suguha).<sup>2</sup>

After a quality control shinsa, the swords were sent to the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy for issuance<sup>3</sup>. This Academy<sup>4</sup> was established with the aid of British officers in Tokyo in 1868 and was moved to Etajima in 1873. Open to all, competition for acceptance was fierce, as was its discipline and physical rigor. Amongst its graduates are 18 Princes of the royal family including a brother of Emperor Showa, Prince Takamatsu.

During the graduation ceremonies the top three graduates, the "three men of talent" (sanshusai), customarily received a gift of honor from the Emperor in the form of a tanto ("dirk")<sup>5</sup>. Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, a cousin of the Emperor and Chief of the Naval General Staff 1932-1941 usually presented these.<sup>6</sup>

Neither Mr. Moriwaki nor the excerpts from Kikusui mention the Naval Academy as a point of distribution for the swords created at the Minatogawa Jinja. By April 17 1941 approximately 60 swords had been forged, polished and placed in two plain wood carrying chests in the divine warehouse of the shrine. All but one of the mounted swords were presented by priest Nakano along with amulets during a ceremony at the Navy Officer's Club (Suikosha) in Tokyo three days later.<sup>7</sup> The author assumes that the vast majority of these swords were distributed to naval officers which would include Naval Academy graduates, possibly at time of graduation, and graduates of the Imperial Naval Staff College but not to cadets.

In general, the swords are signed tachimei below the mekugi ana: "MINATOGAWA JINJA MASA....." (湊川神社正.....). The Showa date is on the ura. Above the signature and the mekugi-ana is the shrine Kikusui mon. Presumably this has caused some to refer to these swords as Kikusui-to. This mon is also found on the opposite side of the copper habaki.

The following five swords represent all of the above smiths who signed with the Masa kanji as part of their art name at the Kikusui Tanto Kai with the exception of MASAYOSHI.

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<sup>1</sup> Coleman

<sup>2</sup> Moriwaki

<sup>3</sup> Coleman

<sup>4</sup> See Figures # 10 and 12

<sup>5</sup> For additional information about Imperial Gift Swords in regards to the Imperial Japanese Navy see appendix # 1

<sup>6</sup> Bullock p. 44

<sup>7</sup> Kikusui Vol. 9, # 3, p. 12

# 1. MASATADA

TYPE: Tachi

NAGASA: 25 15/16"; (66 cm)

SUGATA: Buke-zukuri, iori-mune, koshi-sori, high shinogi, wide shinogi ji, strong nikku, and chu-kissaki.

JI-HADA: Muji with dense fine nie.

HAMON: Ko-choji gunome-midare with nice ashi iri mixed in clusters, some pointed like reverse ashi. Multiple short ashi. In nioi with some nie.

BOSHI: Sugu ko-maru with short kaeri.

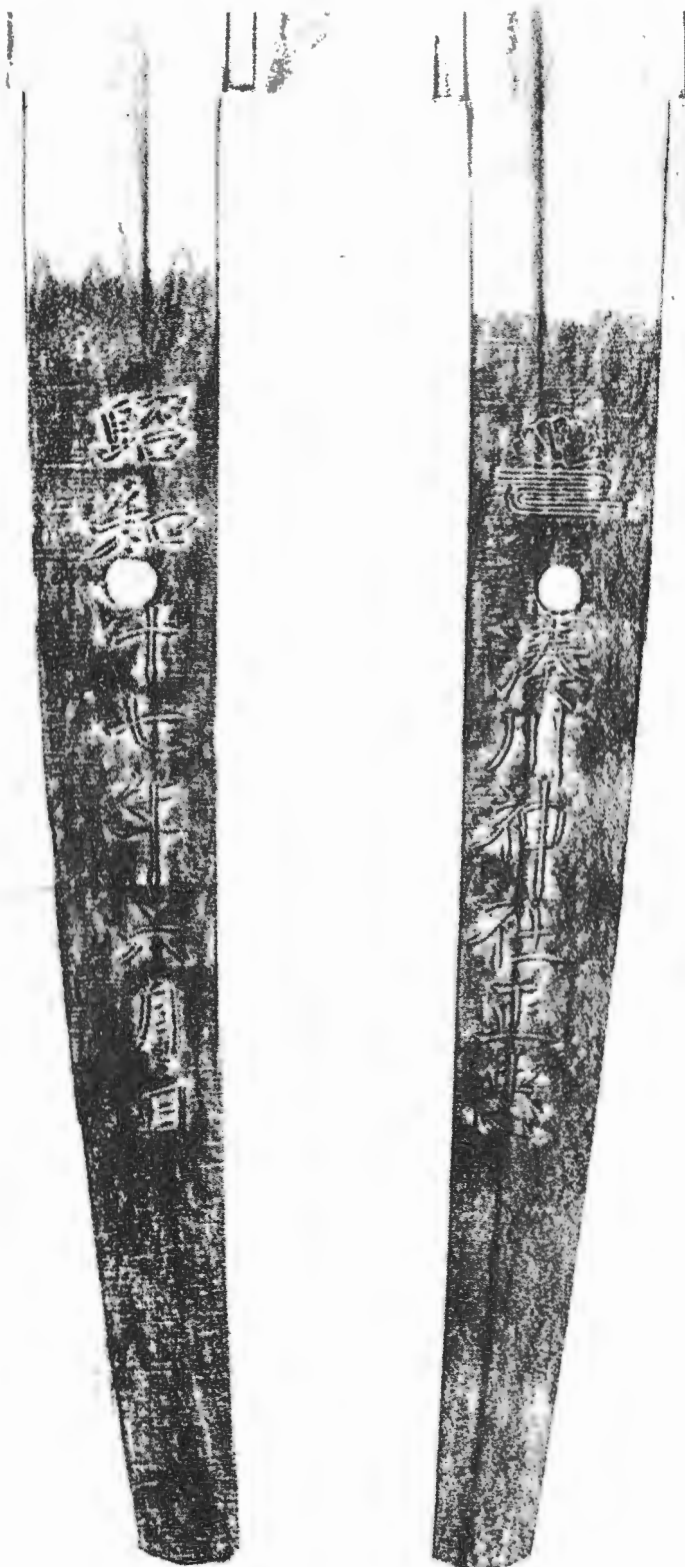
NAKAGO: Ubu. One mekugi-ana. File marks: kiri yasurime (straight across file marks). Kuri-jiri (rounded tip). Without Arabic numerals on jiri butt.

MEI:

Omote: SHOWA JU SHICHI NEN ROKU GATSU HI (A day in June 1942)

Ura: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA MASATADA

KOSHIRAE: Kaigunto, black lacquered wood. Metal parade drag type tip on the kojiri of the saya.



湊川神社正忠

昭和十七年六月日

## 2. MASATAKA

TYPE: Tachi

NAGASA: 25 13/16" (66 cm)

SUGATA: Buke-zukuri, iori-mune, koshi-zori, fumbari, ubu. Kissaki is halfway between chu and ikubi.

JI-HADA: Moderately coarse running itame.

HAMON: Saka ko-choji-midare, which widens towards the kissaki, in nioi deki with ko-nie. Deep ashi. Yo.

BOSHI: Almost sankaku, ko-maru, short kaeri.

NAKAGO: Ubu with one mekugi-ana. Kiri yasurime. Kuri-jiri. Arabic numeral (658) on jiri butt.

MEI:

Omote: SHOWA JU SHICHI NEN JU GATSU HI  
(A day in September 1942)

Ura: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA  
MASATAKA

KOSHIRAE: Shirasaya with sayagaki (1981) by MASATAKA indicating that the sword was forged in the style of Ko-Bizen Masatsune. It is interesting to note that this sword had army shingunto koshirae in the past.



湊川神社正孝

昭和十七年九月日

### 3. MASA AKI

TYPE: Tachi

NAGASA: 25" (64 cm)

SUGATA: Buke-zukuri, iori-mune, gentle koshi-sori, strong hira-niku, Chu-kissaki.

JI-HADA: Ko-itame with considerable masame effects

HAMON: Medium width gentle notare made up of saka-ko-choji, some being multiple, of nioi deki with nie. Extensive deep splaying ashi, some yo. The lower ura is gunome.

BOSHI: Sugu, ko-maru, short kaeri.

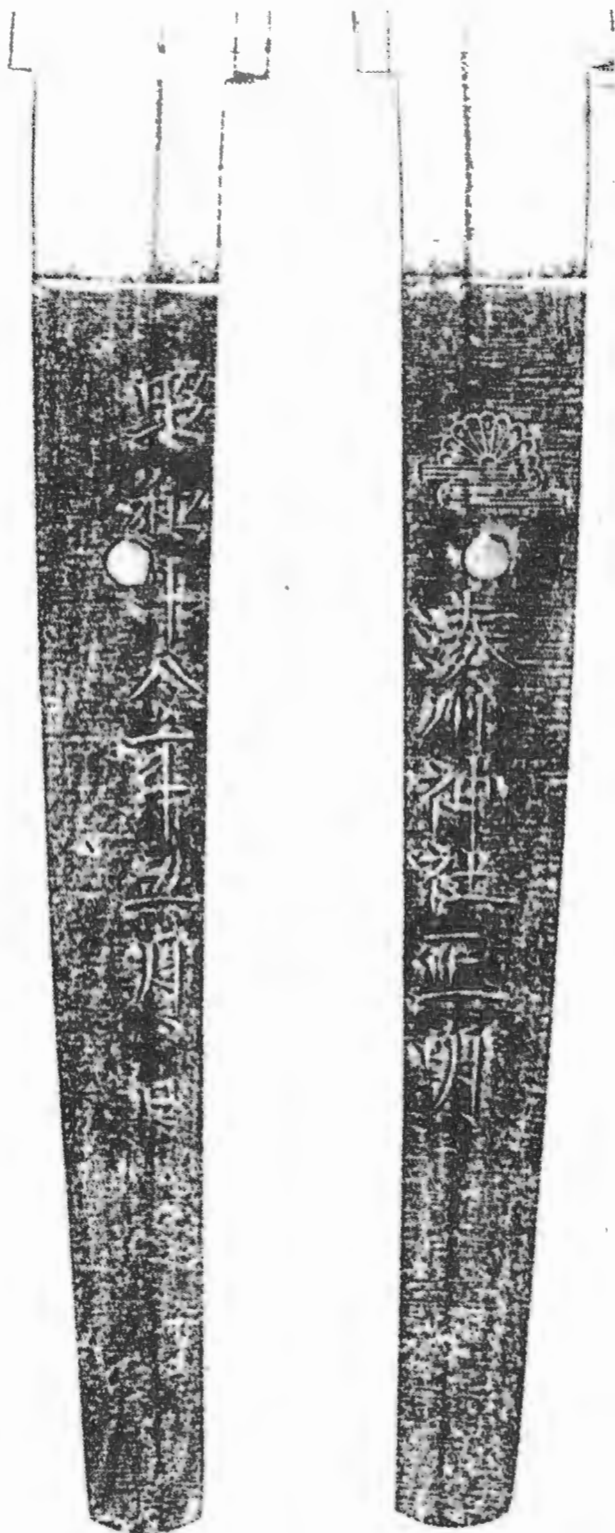
NAKAGO: Ubu. One mekugi ana. Kiri yasurime. Kiri-jiri. Arabic numeral (967) on jiri butt.

MEI: Omote: SHOWA JU HACHI NEN GO GATSU HI (A day in May 1943)

Ura: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA MASA AKI.

KOSHIRAE: Kaigunto, lacquered wood.

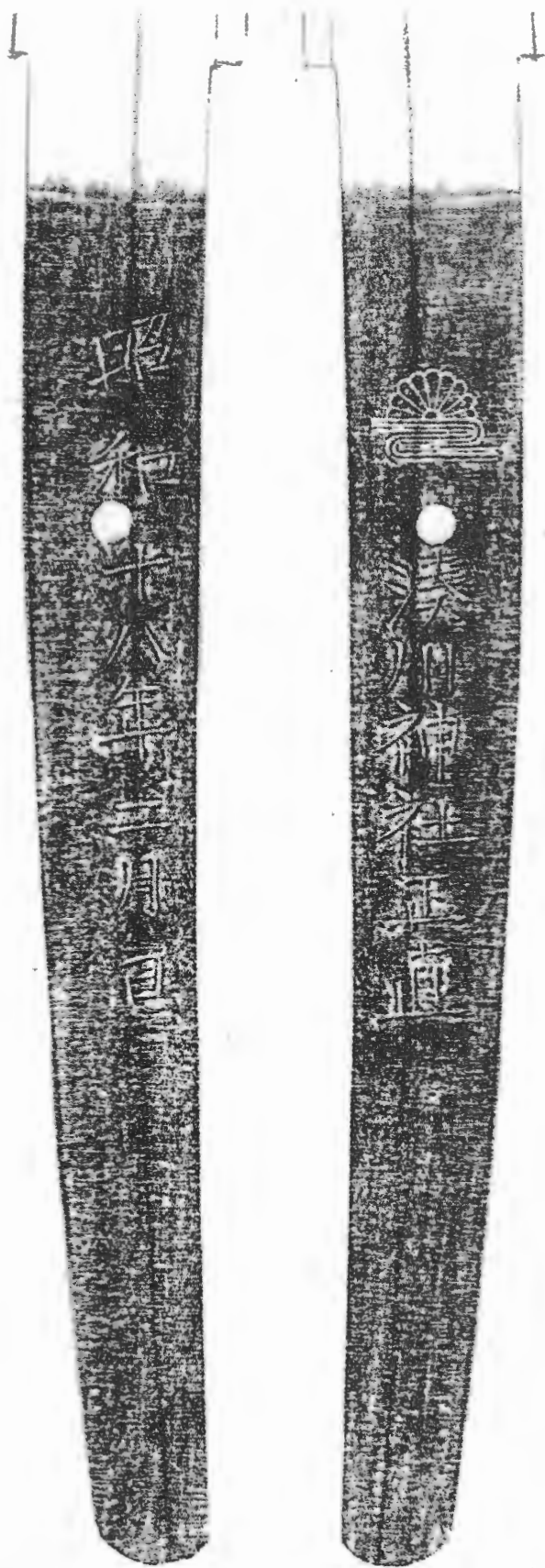
NTHK Kanteisho origami.



湊川神社正明

昭和十八年五月日

## 4. MASANAO

TYPE: TachiNAGASA: 27" (69 cm)SUGATA: Buke-zukuri, iori-mune, barely koshisori, fumbari, ubu. Chu-kissaki.JI-HADA: Very fine ko-itame with strong ji-nie.HAMON: Starts at the ha-machi with a narrow medium gunome/ko-choji, then widens into saka-choji-midare, in nioi-deki with considerable nie of differing size and irregular distribution, extensive deep ashi, some separated along with yo. Some strings of nie above the hamon almost like shimaba.BOSHI: A muted continuation of the hamon with nijuba and kinsuji, ko-maru, short kaeri.NAKAGO: Ubu with one mekugi-ana. Kiri yasurimei. Kuri-jiri. Arabic numeral (842) on jiri butt.MEI: Omote: SHOWA JU HACHI NEN NI GATSU HI  
(A day in February 1943) Ura: <Kikusui>  
MINATOGAWA JINJA MASANAOKOSHIRAE: Late same naval kaigunto.

湊川神社正直

昭和十八年二月日

# 5. MASAKIYO

TYPE: Tachi

NAGASA: 26 15/16" (68 cm)

SUGATA: Buke-zukuri, iori-mune, koshi-sori, chu-kissaki, ubu.

JI-HADA: Muji-like with some masame effects.

HAMON: Medium width notare made up of ko-choji, which narrows approaching the kissaki. Nioi-deki with ko-nie. Yo and some kinsuji in the hamon.

BOSHI: Both sides start as suguha, the omote becomes ichi-mai like with short kaeri, the ura is ko-maru with truncated kaeri.

NAKAGO: Ubu with one mekugi-ana. Kiri yasurimei. Iriyamagata-jiri (asymmetrically pointed). Without Arabic numeral on jiri butt.

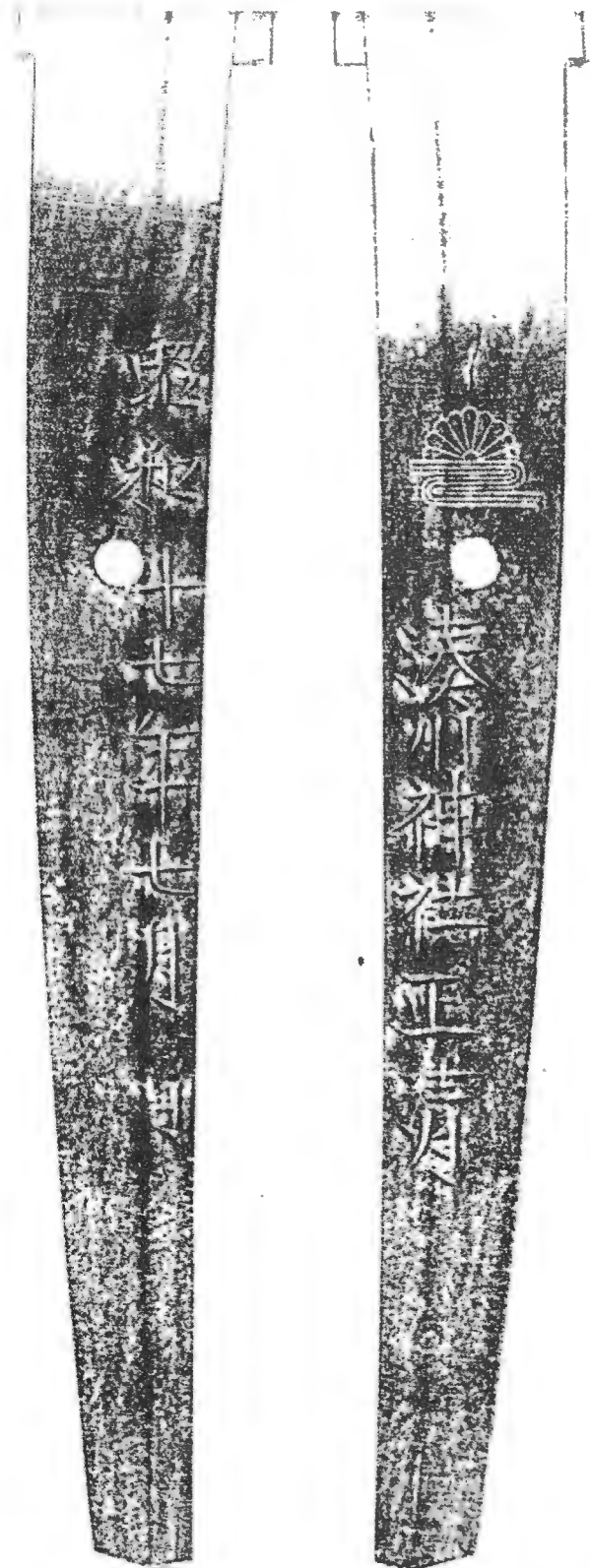
MEI: Omote: SHOWA JU SHICHI NEN SHICHI GATSU HI

(A day in July 1942)

Ura: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA MASAKIYO

KOSHIRAE: Kaigunto. Lacquered wood.

NTHK Kanteisho origami.



湊川神社正清

昭和十七年七月日

## 6. MASAYOSHI

The author has neither seen a sword made by this smith nor an oshigata thereof. This probably is an observation of statistical insignificance but may also indicate that this smith forged fewer swords.

The majority of swords encountered by the author are of the standard format of the five swords described above: tachi, with the character Masa in the smith's signature, Minatogawa Jinja designation and Kikusui mon. Variation in sword type, of signature, absence of the mon, and the addition of a slogan exist as shown by the following examples.

I. Masataka forged seven tachi (according to a newspaper article accompanying his letter) which Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the principal naval commander, awarded <sup>1</sup> to fleets that had distinguished themselves. This included a recognition letter. Coleman mentions twelve presentation pieces. The exact number is therefore uncertain. Perhaps the difference of five, if true, implies they were tanto. Masataka donated a full-length oshigata of the seventh tachi mounted as a scroll to the Tottori Prefectural Museum in 1985. It was forged in February 1943. An oshigata of the nakago of this blade is oshigata # 3.

He also donated at this time a letter of thanks from General Nishio Toshizo in 1940 for a sword he had forged and presented to the General in that year which had won the Prime Minister's Award. The author doubts that this latter sword was made under the auspices of the Kikusui Tanto Kai.

Omote: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA MASATAKA

Ura: SHO RENGO KANTAI SHIREI CHOKAN

KAN DAI ICHI KANTAI SHIREI CHOKAN YAMAMOTO ISOROKU

(Award Overall Combined Fleet Commander in Chief

Concurrently Large First Fleet Commander in Chief Yamamoto Isoroku)

II. Tanto were also forged at the shrine. (See oshigata # 4).

Omote: <Kikusui> MINATOGAWA JINJA MASATADA

Ura: SHOWA JU SHICHI NEN ICHI GATSU (January 1942)

III. Oshigata # 5 depicts a tachi by Masatada forged in 1942 without the Minatogawa Jinja attribution or Kikusui mon. It includes his surname. This sword may have been custom ordered or made at a different location not related to the shrine. Length: 68.2 cm, sori: 2.2 cm.

Omote: SHI KON MURAKAMI MASATADA SAKU KORE (Warrior spirit Murakami Masatada made this)

<sup>1</sup> For abbreviated information about Admiral Yamamoto and swords commissioned by him, see appendix # 2



IV. The following is considered an example of a sword made by Murakami Muramitsu before he received the Masatada art name. (See oshigata # 6)

Omote: OITE MINATOGAWA JINJA MICHIMASA SAKU (At the Minatogawa shrine Michimasa made this)

Ura: SHOWA JU ROKU NEN GO GATSU HI (A day in May, 1941)

This sword received NBTHK Hozon origami in 1998.

V. A sword forged by Masataka signed katana-mei without a date but with a slogan is depicted in oshigata # 7

Omote: <Kikusui> OITE MINATOGAWA JINJA MASATAKA  
(At the Minatogawa Shrine Masataka)

Ura: SHICHI SHO HO KOKU (Seven lives patriotism)

According to legend, the last words of Masashige were “Would that I had seven lives to give for my country”.<sup>1</sup> This sword was in army shingunto mounting without a Kikusui mon on the habaki. It appears to have bo-hi.

VI. A sword made privately near the Minato River by Masataka and not at the Minatogawa Jinja is shown by oshigata # 8:

Omote: OITE MINATOGAWA NO HAN MASATAKA  
(At the Minatogawa riverbank Masataka)

Mr. Moriwaki remembered this sword. It was made at the forge of his residence in Hyogo-ku, Kobe City where he carried out research and forged swords on his off-days. It is one of about 25 swords he forged for individuals from July 5, 1943 when enlisted in the Army until he was sent to China. It is 67 cm long, shaped shinogi zukuri with iori-mune, koshi sori and medium kissaki and forged with tight ko-itame, nie deki, with irregular choji-midare hamon and occasional tobyaki. It is not dated and is in army shingunto mounting. This sword has a battle scar akin to a teppe kizu. Rather than the mark left by an arrowhead, sword or bullet there is a small concave deformity in the nakago in the exact location of a piece of shrapnel embedded in the tsuka.

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<sup>1</sup> Kapur

VII. The Oshigata Book by Fuller and Gregory on page 16 depicts an oshigata:

OITE MINATOGAWA JINJA MASATADA dated August 1941. It does not show the Kikusui mon, which probably would have been depicted if present.

It is not completely clear which mei Masatada and Masataka used during the period of inception of the smithy and the formal receipt of their art name (December 25, 1940 to July 12, 1941). The above mentioned Michimasa (道政) is felt to represent one of Masatada's signatures. Conceivably he may also have used the mei Murakami (村上) or Muramitsu (村光).

Masataka may have used the mei Morimitsu (森光) or Masamitsu (正光). The Mitsu character may have been a tribute to Ikeda Yasumitsu of the Nihonto Tanren Kai where both smiths received training.

The author has seen sixteen oshigata of swords made at the Minatogawa Jinja during the 1940-1945 period. Of the swords indicating production at the Jinja on the nakago, the earliest date is May 1941 (Michimasa). The earliest signature with the MASA kanji as first part of the art name is August 1941 (Masatada). The earliest signature using the signature convention of the majority of these swords: "Minatogawa Jinja Masa..." is October 1941 (Masatada). The latest date seen in this series is November 1944 on a tachi (Masanao).

Some of the mentioned swords were found in army shingunto mounting. Fuller and Gregory<sup>1</sup> depict a naval officer carrying an army shingunto and suggest that these swords may have been carried by officers mainly involved in land warfare attached to units such as the landing forces (Special Naval Landing Force<sup>2</sup>). As mentioned before, swords made at the Minatogawa Jinja were distributed to naval officers and others<sup>3</sup>. Yasukuni-to were supplied to officers of the Imperial Army and Navy.<sup>4</sup> Theoretically therefore kikusui-to could be found in army shingunto mounting and Yasukuni-to in kaigunto mounting. There apparently is a Yasukuni-to forged by Yasushige in kaigunto mounting located in The Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

The Kikusui mon on the nakago and habaki of the majority of these swords show a marked uniformity and similarity and the author has thus wondered if they were perhaps engraved with the aid of a machine. Close visual inspection with magnification up to 30x using a digital video comparator of a December 1943 Masaaki tachi clearly showed, according to an engraving expert, that the mon on both its habaki and nakago were not cut by machine but by a hand held tool probably not completely free-hand but using a transfer technique such as a stamp of the design prior to incising it.<sup>6</sup> The author has seen one unsigned katana length blade with an essentially identical mon on the nakago in

<sup>1</sup> *Japanese Military and Civil Swords and Dirks* pp. 65, 117, 242.

<sup>2</sup> According to *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* p. 78, field uniforms, small arms and personal equipment were similar to that used by the Army with an anchor instead of star on the cloth cap; dress uniform was navy blues.

<sup>3</sup> *Kikusui* Vol. 9, # 2, p. 14

<sup>4</sup> Kishida p. 38 (translation p. 27)

<sup>5</sup> Han Bing Siong. Letter to the author of August 17, 2000

<sup>6</sup> See figure # 15

the usual location as previously mentioned and another sword with it situated on the blade proper about 10-15 cm distal to the tsuba. Perhaps one individual was assigned to carve the mon.

Of uncertain significance are Arabic numerals punched in the nakago jiri of some of these swords.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Moriwaki states they were present on some blades from 1940 to July 1943 and remembered striking them in. Perhaps they represent a registration or assembly mark.

The Kikusui Tanto Kai probably had its own polishing facility. A burnished notation on the shinogi-ji under the habaki on one of these swords states that the Minatogawa Sword Polishing Area polished the sword (approximate translation).<sup>2</sup>

Comparison with the swords forged at the Yasukuni shrine is inevitable. That shrine was founded in 1869 three years before the Minatogawa shrine and is located in Tokyo. It is believed to be the resting-place of the spirits of all those that died for the empire. According to Tom Kishida's Yasukuni-to, the Imperial Japanese Army established a forge on its grounds in 1933, the Nihonto Tanren Kai (日本刀鍛錬会) the Japanese Sword Forging Association, and 13 smiths (Yasukuni tosho) forged 8100 swords (Yasukuni-to).

A sharp division existed between the Army and Navy probably the worst of any country, accompanied by rivalry and acrimony dating back to antagonism between the Chosu (favoring the Army) and Satsuma (favoring the Navy) clans.<sup>3 4</sup> It is thus not surprising that the Navy established a forge at its own shrine. A newspaper article accompanying Mr. Moriwaki's letter mentions that the Minatogawa shrine was the Navy's shrine.

The Navy also used the Kikusui mon and had adopted it.<sup>5</sup> This mon was painted on the funnel of the battleship Yamato<sup>6</sup> prior to its one-way mission to relieve Okinawa on April 6 1945 in operation Ten Ichigo ("Heaven One Counter"). It was also present on the tower of the submarine I-47<sup>7</sup> for example, which was part of the Kikusui fleet established in November 1944, and which carried manned torpedoes (kaiten<sup>8 9</sup>: "Turning of the Heavens"). These events represent tragic involvement with a desperate mission and kamikaze tactics.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The author has seen one non-descript mark in this area.

<sup>2</sup> See Figure # 14

<sup>3</sup> Japan at War p. 62

<sup>4</sup> Evans p. 31

<sup>5</sup> Coleman

<sup>6</sup> See figure # 13

<sup>7</sup> Reappearing the United Fleet p.135

<sup>8</sup> Mayer pp. 80-81

<sup>9</sup> Chang mentions a "Kaiten" two man attack submarine and a "Kikusui" one-man one-way attack submarine on display on the grounds of The Japan Maritime Self Defense Force Service School, the former Imperial Japanese Naval Academy. Sinclair reports a "Kaiten" in the Yasukuni shrine museum with the Kikusui mon.

<sup>10</sup> Kapur

interested in gendaito and even less in swords made during the war for whatever reason (many were not true Nihonto). Older swords are likely of more concern. It is hoped however that further information is discovered and forthcoming especially from Japanese sources. This should allow for a more informative article before relevant information about this small group of smiths is lost in the mists of history.

(Note: Depicted oshigata are not necessarily to scale.)

## Appendix #1

As mentioned, the top three graduates of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy received a sword as a gift from the Emperor, an Onkashi-to, in the form of a tanto. Imperial Japanese Daggers 1883-1945 by an anonymous author depicts a Model 1883 Naval Officer's Dagger with the comment: Imperial gift to the top Naval Academy cadets. <sup>1</sup> Curiously, it appears to be unsigned. <sup>2</sup> Further documentation would be of interest.

Gift swords were also supplied to the top graduates of the Imperial Naval Staff College (Kaigun Daigakko) where advanced officer training took place. These also were tanto apparently forged by Horii Toshihide until 1941 when he became too ill. Production of these blades was then assumed by the Nihonto Tanren Kai, which had supplied the top graduates of the Imperial Army Staff College with Onkashi-to in the form of katana. <sup>3</sup> The above mentioned date may not be exact; according to Bowen, Toshihide (Hideaki) was commissioned to forge a gensui-to in 1942 which he finished <sup>4</sup> before he passed away in 1943. He made many katana and tanto with many also made with gun barrel steel of the battleship Mikasa (probably using only a token amount). Some have a horimono of part of Admiral Togo's "Z" signal in calligraphy form: "The Fate of the Empire Depends on this Battle", an echo of Admiral Nelson.

The author does not know if tanto forged by the Kikusui Tanto Kai were used as Onkashi-to.

## Appendix #2

Admiral Yamamoto was born in Nagaoka, Niigata Prefecture in 1884. He was a graduate of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy and became a Rear Admiral in 1930, a Vice-Admiral in 1934 and an Admiral in November of 1940. He conceived the idea of the carrier strike on the American Pacific Fleet at Hawaii ("Operation Z") and commanded the Combined Fleet. On April 18, 1943 he was killed in ambush while in air transit between Rabaul and Buin on an inspection tour of the Southwest Pacific theater. The American forces had broken the Japanese Naval code and knew his itinerary. He was posthumously promoted to Fleet Admiral (Gensui Kaigun Taisho). A Marshall's badge as well as a

<sup>1</sup> See figure 16

<sup>2</sup> Fuller, in Shokan p. 112, also mentions an unsigned Imperial Gift Sword, a shin-gunto, which belonged to Lieutenant-General Imamura Hitoshi.

<sup>3</sup> Kishida p. 51 (translation pp. 41 and 42)

<sup>4</sup> "Tanto: Blades of Ritual Meiji to Showa" p. 11

sword (gensuito) customarily accompanied this rank. During his second funeral in Nagaoka, his sword and part of his ashes were on display. <sup>1</sup> The identity of this sword (gensuito or his favorite kai-gunto or other sword) is unknown to the author.

As mentioned previously, Admiral Yamamoto commissioned Masataka to forge swords. In addition, according to Caldwell's article, with money awarded by the Emperor, he commissioned his friend Sakai Shigemasa (酒井 繁 正) to forge ten tanto in 1943. These were given to his chiefs of staff and others and show the "Z" signal as a horimono in calligraphy form. Shigemasa was a student of Kasama Shigetsugu and Miaguchi Yasuhiro and was designated a Jumei Tosho for the Navy and a Mukansa smith in 1981. <sup>2</sup>

Shortly after Yamamoto's death, his widow ordered ten similar tanto commissioned and supervised by the Imperial Household from Endo Mitsuoki (遠 藤 光 起) <sup>3</sup>—Caldwell names Mitsutada-, also a boyhood friend of the Admiral, who had assisted Shigemasa with the initial ten swords. These tanto were forged in part with a small amount of steel from the #1 gun of Togo's battleship Mikasa. <sup>4</sup>

Kenji Mishina states that Admiral Yamamoto carried a favorite kai-gunto <sup>5</sup> forged in 1935 by Amada Sadayoshi (天田 貞 吉), which was a gift that year from Yamamoto's eldest brother. Sadayoshi's son Amada Akitsugu (天田 昭 次) became a Mukansa smith in 1974 and is now a Ningen Kokuho. This sword is thought to have survived. Akitsugu and people in Niigata Prefecture hope it is located and also wish it were well taken care of, wherever it resides.

The author would like to express his appreciation to the individuals who supplied information for this article. In particular: Koizumi Yo and Wada Tsuguyasu who supplied excerpts from Japanese sources. In addition: Chris Bowen, Arnold Frenzel, Jose Greco, Han Bing Siong, Chris Leung, David McDonald, Peter Richards, Barry Thomas and Stephen Yap.

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<sup>1</sup> Shokan pp. 301-304, and Potter pp. 301-311.

<sup>2</sup> Kishida p. 86 (translation p. 91)

<sup>3</sup> Ohno p. 26

<sup>4</sup> Caldwell

<sup>5</sup> See figure # 11

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The following list of swordsmiths corresponds to the flowchart on the next page:

1. Takahashi Sadatsugu
2. Kajiyama Tokutaro Yasunori
3. Ikeda Shuji Yasumitsu
4. Shimizu Toshiro Yoshiyuki
5. Kotani Kenzo Yasunori
6. Murakami Muramitsu Masatada
7. Moriwaki Kaname Masataka
8. Sakamoto Kikujiro Kikumitsu
9. Hara Kakutaro Okimitsu
10. Masuda Tetsuo Masaaki
11. Okada Yoshiaki Masanao
12. Fujiwara Yoshinori Masayoshi
13. Ito Kishinaga Masakiyo
14. Kanetani Katsuhiro Katsumasa
15. Hirai Masamitsu
16. Ishido Kitaji Masamori
17. Hayashi Ryuuji Nagataka
18. Endo Isao Masakuni
19. Keith Austin Nobuhira
20. Seo Masaki
21. Hara Hiroshi Okimitsu
22. Wakita Harumitsu
23. Kobayashi Tatsuzo Kyokane
24. Suruga Shizuo Masamitsu
25. Minatogawa Swordsmith

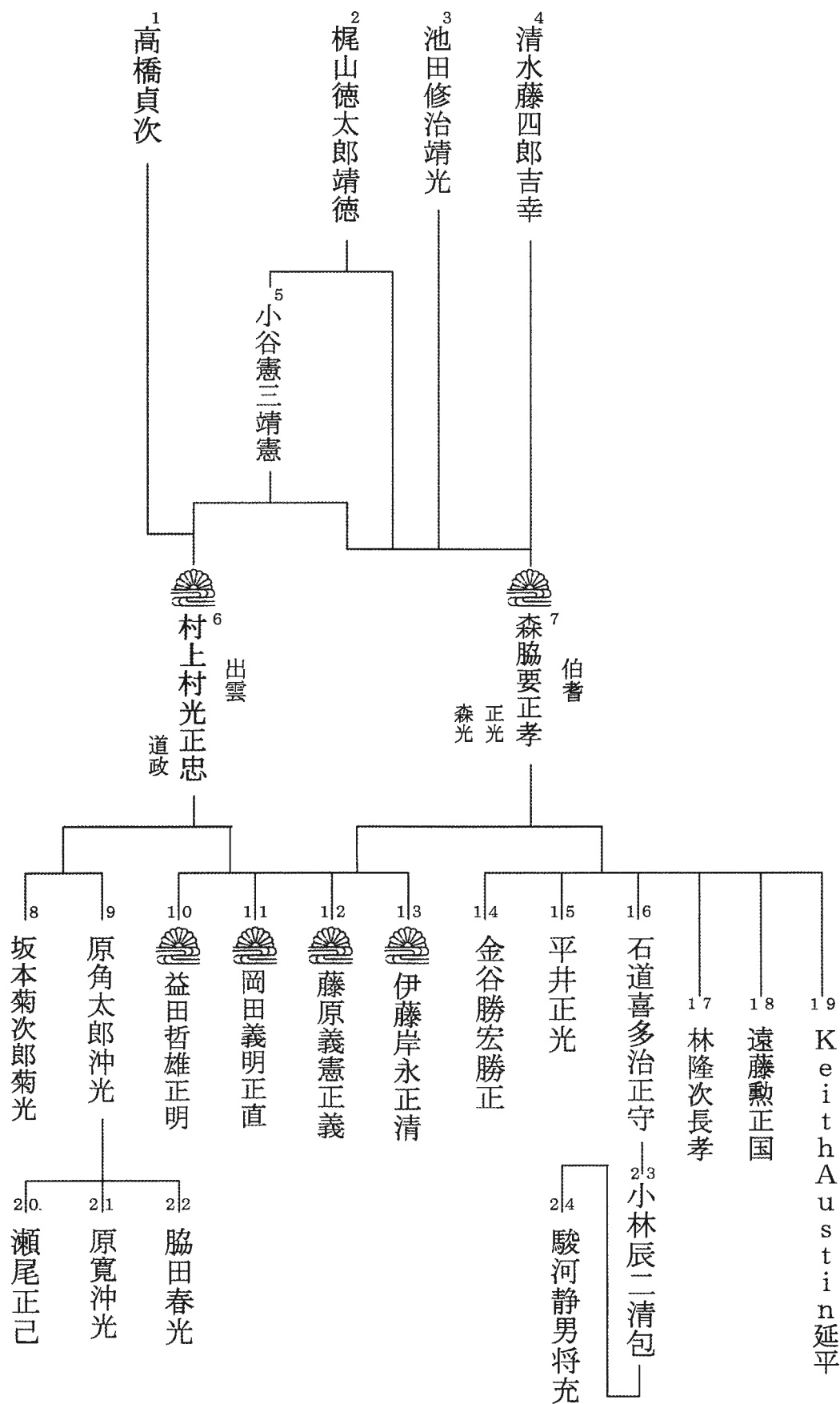
25



X  
X  
X  
X



湊川刀匠





明治十八年六月日

於楠公神前

月山源貞一精鍛之

GASSAN SADAKAZU

(June 1885):

From Shinshinto Taikan by Iimura Kashio p.118

Oshigata # 1

別格官幣社湊川神社御神寶御太刀余鐵

昭和八年十月吉日

芥實刀月山貞勝謹作 一花押一



GASSAN SADAKATSU  
(October 1933)  
Oshigata # 2



湊川神社 正孝

賞

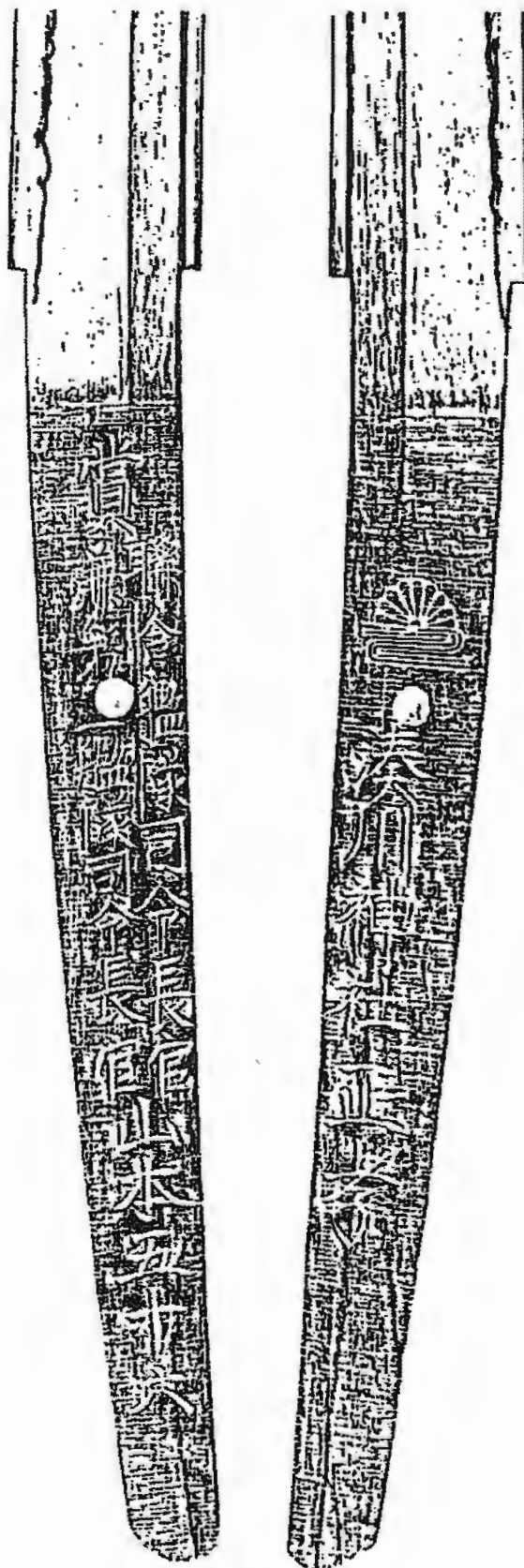
聯合艦隊司令長官  
兼水艦隊司令長官 山本五十六

MASATAKA

(February 1943)

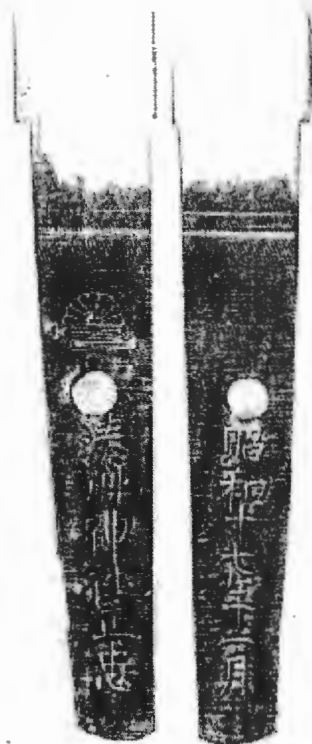
Oshigata # 3

(Text written by Masataka)



長二尺一寸五分・反・六分地金小奎目・脂子小丸

昭和十八年二月日作



湊川神社正忠

昭和十七年一月

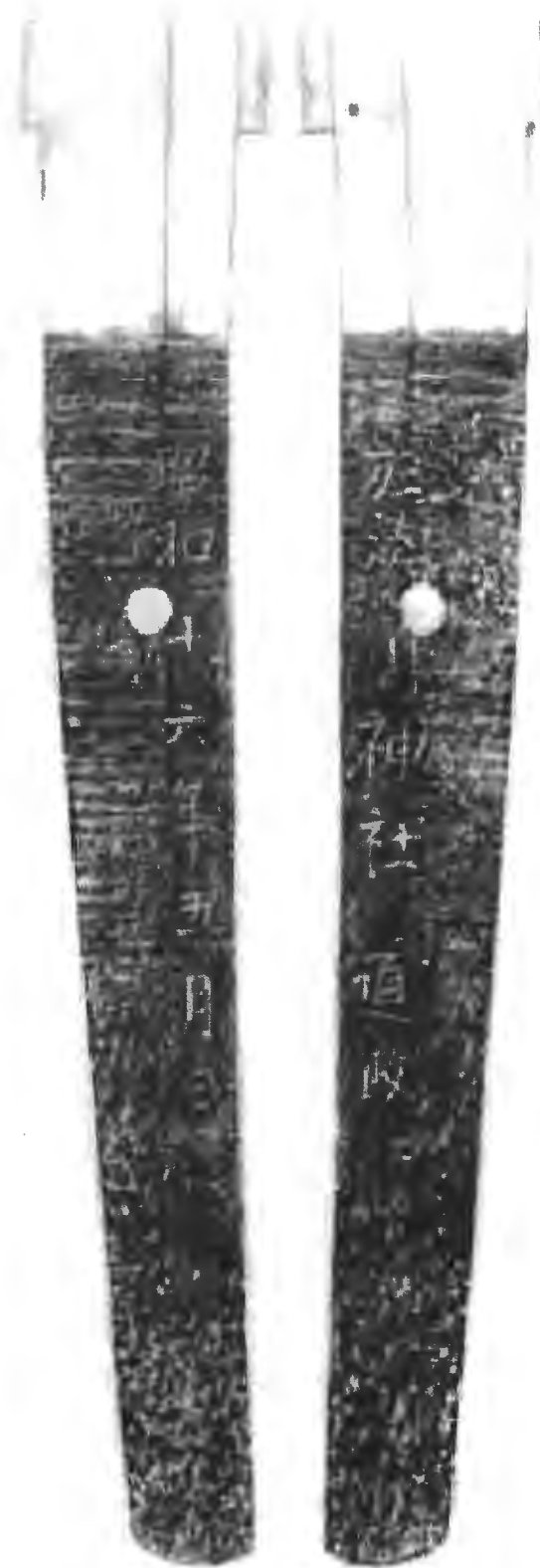
MASATADA  
(January 1942)  
Oshigata # 4



士魂村上正忠作之

昭和十七年一月吉日

MASATADA  
(Inverted image)  
(January 1942)  
Oshiqata # 5



於湊川神社道政作  
昭和十六年五月日

MICHIMASA  
May 1941  
Oshigata # 6





MASATAKA  
Oshigata # 7

七生報國  
於湊川神社正孝



於湊川畔正孝

MASATAKA  
Oshigata # 8



Minatogawa  
(Early 20<sup>th</sup> century, before diversion)  
Figure # 1



Kusunoki Masashige  
By: Yokoyama Taikan (20<sup>th</sup> century)  
Figure # 2



Masashige and Emperor Go-Daigo  
By: Kawasho Aito (June 1819)  
Figure # 3



Masashige and his son Masatsura  
Artist and date unknown)  
Figure # 4



Minatogawa Jinja  
By: Kawase Hasui (1920-30s)  
Figure # 5



Minatogawa Jinja Seal  
Figure # 6



Minatogawa Jinja (currently) Figure # 7

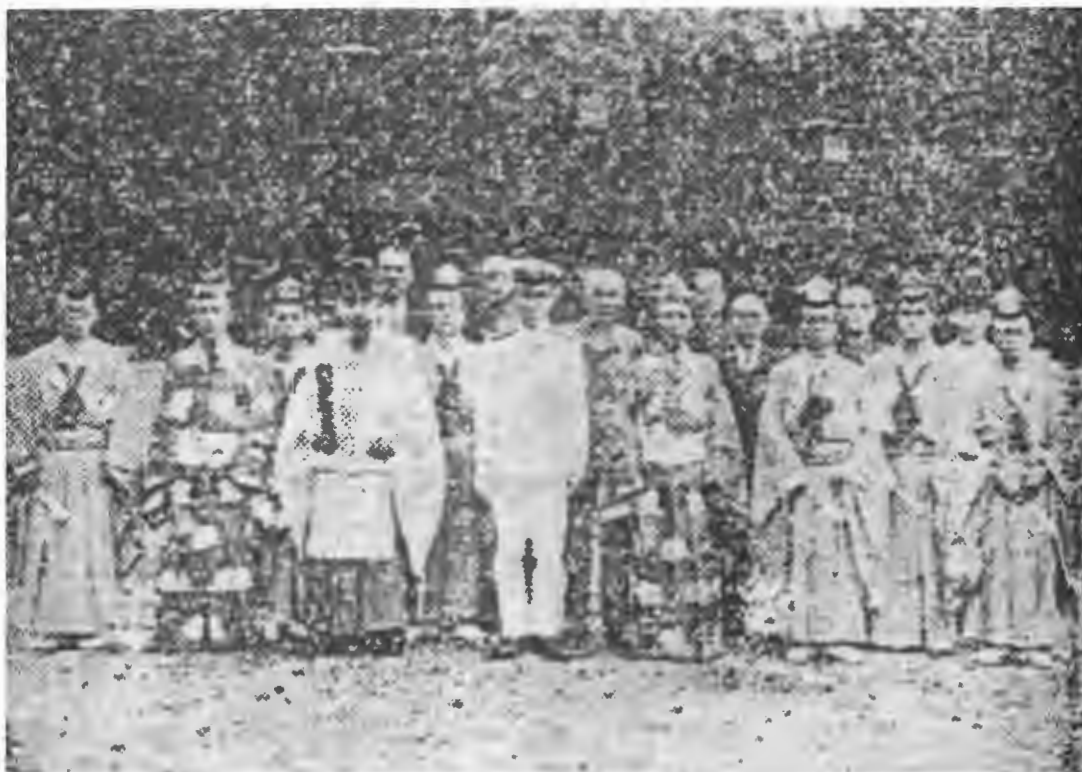


Figure # 8

From: Kikusui Vol. 9, #5, p 15

July 12 1941

(Front row: the person on the naval officer's left is probably Masatada;  
the second person to his right is probably Masataka)



Masataka

From: Gendai Toko Meikan by Ohno p.106

Figure # 9



Imperial Japanese Naval Academy

From: "The Japanese Naval Academy" by Blescoe p.329 late 1940s

Figure # 10



Admiral Yamamoto

(See appendix # 2)

Figure # 11



Imperial Japanese Naval Academy Cadet

Circa 1930s From: Etajima by Bullock fp.14

Figure # 12

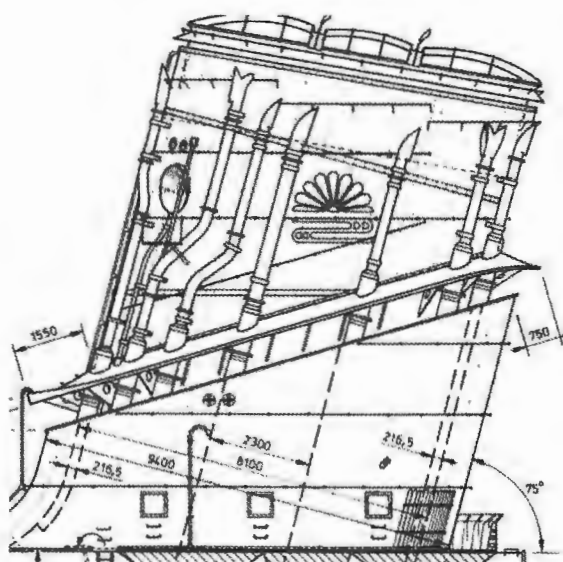


Figure # 13  
From: The Battleship Yamato by Skulski p.60



Mon on habaki



Figure # 15



Mon on nakago

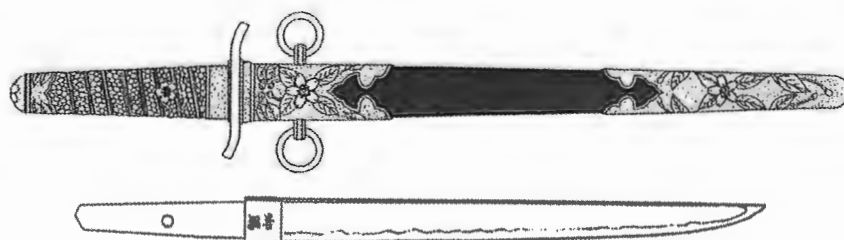


Figure # 16  
From: Imperial Japanese Daggers 1883-1945  
(See appendix # 1)

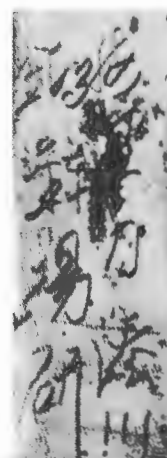


Figure # 14  
Polisher's notation